

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
November 24, 2011
Thanksgiving



Luke 17:11-19

Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

There was one of those little news videos from Thailand. A gecko was on the wall – being strangled by a snake! Oh, man, I thought – that's terrible! Wait – there's another gecko nearby – watching. Will he intervene? Can he help? The little buddy gecko dances – back and forth – looking for an opening. He sees his chance – dashes in and bites the snake! The snake relaxes for a moment – then tightens his grip. It's now even worse than before. Again the little buddy gecko dances – he attacks. He bites the snake – really hard! The snake lets go and falls to the floor! The little buddy has rescued his friend! Again – obviously – what a pale picture of the devil – that serpent from Hell – wrapped around our heart – quite literally squeezing the life out of us. Literally moments after the devil's first painfully successful attack on Eve and Adam – comes the promise that God's Son would become one of us -- to rescue us! How wonderful is that? This Thanksgiving we pray:

We Are Thankful!

- 1. First for earthly blessings**
- 2. Mostly for eternal blessings!**

This is the paragraph where we talk about context. We always do that – context. Bible history – Bible accounts – don't happen in isolation – like all separate glass cases in a museum. It is all linked together – all linear – going somewhere! This Thanksgiving we are concentrating on the Gospel of St. Luke. Luke was a Physician. His Gospel is filled with miracles of healing. Luke will use the technical name for the disease. He will describe the symptoms. He will talk about the miracle of healing. Luke wrote about Simon Peter's mother-in-law who had a terrible fever. **Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.** Luke 4:39 Jesus made her well – and what's the first thing she does? She serves Jesus and his disciples. That's what we will do, too. We realize Jesus has taken away all our sins. In thankfulness – we look for ways to serve him! Early on Jesus healed a man with leprosy. **While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along, who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can; make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.** Luke 5:12,13 Luke wrote, "Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up

on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Luke 5:18-20 That would have been enough! Think about it. God's Son looks you straight in the eye and says, "Friend, your sins are forgiven!" Then—Jesus says to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Luke 5:24b-26

Luke chapter 17 **Jesus said to his disciples, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves."** There is food for thought—right there. There are going to be temptations—temptations to do what we know is wrong. Shame on me—if I am the source of that temptation—if I cause people around me to sin. Jesus said, **"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day ...if someone makes the same mistake—does the same painful hurtful thing to you again and again and again and again and again and again and again...and says—I'm sorry—*sincerely* sorry—forgive them! The apostles said, "Increase our faith!"** Make our faith stronger—so we can be patient and merciful like that. **Jesus said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.** How many trees have you moved lately? Only Jesus can make our faith stronger and stronger! When our faith grows stronger—it doesn't mean we earn or deserve anything from Jesus. Jesus went on to say, **"Suppose one of you had a servant/a slave plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant/slave when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink? Would he thank the servant/slave because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"** When we have come to Church—Sunday after Sunday—teaching Sunday School and ushering and singing in the choir and putting flowers on the altar and donating the bulletins and setting up for communion...we don't get to say—now Jesus owes *me!* We have only done what we did—because Jesus died on the cross to forgive us! That's all that matters! That's all that counts! Jesus died and rose again to wash away all my sins!

¹¹ **Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.** ¹² **As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance** ¹³ **and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"** Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem—up to Jerusalem to die on the cross to take away all our guilt and shame! On his way—traveling along the border between Samaria and Galilee—Jesus—not by accident—bumped into ten people who were suffering from leprosy. What do you know about leprosy? When I was very little my Grandma used to crochet these white cotton bandages—a couple of inches wide—and really long—like five or six feet long—she would roll them up. Then her church would send them to leper colonies—places where all the people who lived there had leprosy. When I was little I was always under the impression that people who had leprosy—would have parts fall off. That—according to Wikipedia—isn't true. Leprosy is most often called Hansen's disease—after a doctor named Gerhard Hansen. It's a disease of the peripheral nerves and the mucosa of the upper respiratory tract. You have terrible skin sores. Hansen's disease is what you call progressive and degenerative—getting worse and worse. It damages your skin,

nerves, limbs and eyes. Parts of your body become numb – you get secondary infections – your fingers and toes become shortened and deformed as cartilage is absorbed into your body. Still today they don't know how you spread Hansen's Disease. The best guess--it's spread from person to person from little droplets of moisture from your lungs. It also seems you can catch Hansen's Disease from Armadillos! In the past 20 years some 15 million people have been cured of leprosy. Having said that – 2,000 years ago – to find you had leprosy would be like stage 4 cancer today. These 10 men who were sick and cut off from their family and all their loved ones were desperate when they cried out, **“Jesus, Master, have pity of us!”** Without Jesus they had no hope! When Jesus saw them – he told them to go and show themselves to the priests – the public health officials – the people who alone could pronounce them/certify them well – so they could go home to their families. On the way to the priests they were healed – made well and whole. I would imagine Jesus made their skin – softer than the softest skin of the softest little newborn baby. Imagine how wonderful that skin would have been – when Jesus made them well! When Jesus worked a miracle – the water was turned into the best wine – the eyes that were blind could see clearly without any glasses. And when Jesus cleansed lepers their skin was more wonderful than ever!

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan. If you had been cut off from all the people you loved. If you had been so sick for such a long time – and now – a miracle you were well – what would you do? Would you run to the Priest – who would say you were well – so you could go by the people you love more than life – and hug them closer and tighter than you ever did? Or would you turn back and find Jesus – and throw yourself at Jesus' feet and thank Him? Would you bow down so low that your face – your whole body was in the dust before Jesus – thanking Him for saving you? That's what one leper did – and he was a Samaritan. He was part Jewish and part something else. He was a Samaritan – someone who knew some of God's Word – and part all kinds of false doctrine! This was the last person you would expect to come and thank Jesus – and he did. The Holy Spirit – that filled his heart – made him come back – with a thankful heart – to praise Jesus with a loud voice. He wanted anyone and everyone to know – that Jesus had made him well! He was so thankful!

¹⁷ **Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”** Saying thank you – it sounds simple enough. But do we? I held the door the other day – for children coming into Church to sing for Jesus. Most of them were very focused – very quiet through the door to sing for Jesus. And that's great. Some who were a little braver said, “Good morning, Pastor Schultz!” And I whispered, “Good morning!” Only one – out of almost literally 100 children said, “Thank you!” I said, “You are welcome!” Just one! Second service – again almost 100 little people going by as I was the door stop. Again a handful – “Good morning!” That same little boy from 1st service was also in the group for 2nd service. Again he and he alone said, “Thank you!” And I whispered back – “You are welcome, *again!*” Just one! Thanksgiving! More and more people are calling today Turkey Day! As if today is about turkey and stuffing, sweet potatoes with melted marshmallows – green beans with those little crispy onion rings and pumpkin and mince meat pie! Then after lots of football in the TV room and lots of visiting in the kitchen cold turkey sandwiches with snooty mustard, chips and pickles and pumpkin torte! Then at midnight – literally running – in your literal jammies into stores to get money off on electronic Christmas gifts! Today is Thanksgiving! Thanksgiving for all of God's blessings. Thanksgiving for all the food in our stores – in our refrigerators. The literally \$100 worth of food in our refrigerator door – the sauces we drizzle on our food – because who can eat French fries without

ketchup or who can eat salad without dressing or chicken nuggets without dipping sauce or ribs without barbecue sauce or steak without steak sauce or tacos without taco sauce or a banana split without caramel sauce? Today is about Thanksgiving – not cursing and swearing and taking God’s name in vain because people who are paid literally thousands of dollars for 60 minutes of a children’s game aren’t playing as well as we want them to. Today is about Thanksgiving – giving thanks for the most wonderful blessings of all – faith, forgiveness – an inheritance in Heaven incorruptible. May God make us thankful people – thanking him today and thanking him forever in Heaven!

~~**To God alone is glory!**~~